

Eastchurch CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118644
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339263
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Goodwin
Headteacher	Pauline Shipley
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Around two thirds of inspectors' time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by staff, all of whom were seen leading classes. They also observed small group activities taught by teaching assistants. Meetings were held with groups of pupils. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and senior staff. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's development plan and various policies. They analysed the results of 140 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils achieve in Years 1 to 6, particularly in their writing and mathematics
- how well pupils' apparently good personal development and care help them enjoy and achieve
- how senior leaders are involved in improving aspects of the school, such as community cohesion and teaching
- how governors act as 'critical friends' to judge how senior managers are driving improvement prompted by changes to the school's age profile and status.

Information about the school

The school is bigger than average and much bigger than at the time of the last inspection. Since then the local authority has reorganised schools from a three-tier to a two-tier system. The coming summer term will be the first time the school has had Year 6 pupils taking national tests. There are six classes housed in temporary accommodation. The school's relatively isolated location means pupils live some distance from the school and many come on contract buses. There are well advanced plans to have the children housed in two smaller units using the present site and a new building in nearby Warden Bay. The majority of pupils have White European backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, around a third, is much higher than that typically found nationally. These pupils have a variety of barriers to learning, including behavioural, social, physical and emotional needs, and specific learning difficulties.

There is an onsite Nursery managed by the governors, and along with the two Reception classes, forms the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. A breakfast and mid-morning snack club are also managed by governors. The school has awards including Healthy School and Eco status, reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles and their environmental awareness.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'I like school so much I never want to leave' was a pupil's comment which reflected how much she valued this good school. Pupils' welcoming and cheerful greetings to visitors and each other are noticeable strengths in their personal development. The school's careful approach to supporting pupils' needs, whether they are academic, social, emotional or physical, is a key strength.

Children start school in the Nursery with levels of ability which are well below those typically found. Lively and stimulating activities help them make a smooth start to their school life. This good progress continues in the Reception classes so that by the time they enter Year 1, the gap in reaching the levels expected for their age is narrowing. In Years 1 to 6, pupils generally make good progress, but there is some unevenness in the rates of progress between classes. Although predominantly good overall, some teaching is not as consistent in demanding the most of pupils and in helping them check on how well they learn. Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities keep up with classmates well, due to the close support they receive. Good behaviour is generally the norm, often as the result of pupils feeling safe and secure. This helps them achieve well. Based upon their current work and information collected by the school, pupils in Year 6 attain broadly average levels in their work. The school's ongoing focus to improve pupils' writing has been partly successful, but some find spelling, punctuation or writing at length, difficult. In mathematics, pupils are confident in their knowledge and number calculation and their investigative skills in science develop steadily. Pupils' awareness of their environment is a particular strength as pupils know how to be 'eco friendly'. The school council enjoys adding its voice to shaping the school's development. Pupils are very knowledgeable about their locality, aided by local studies, but their awareness of others who live in contrasting localities is not as well developed.

Underpinning the school's success is the commitment of the headteacher and senior staff to promoting high quality care for all aspects of pupils' development. They have navigated recent changes carefully, such as the expanding numbers and the extra accommodation needs. Efforts to remedy the low attendance of some pupils, hindered by the location of the school and transport needs, have been partly successful. However, attendance remains low due to a small, but persistent, number of parents and carers who do not ensure their children attend regularly to make the most of their time at school. The governors know and support the school well, helping guide and shape the school's direction. Their support, combined with clear self-evaluation routines to generate priorities for development, and with clear direction from senior leaders, mean the school has good capacity for further improvement

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' skills and confidence in writing in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - giving them more guidance about to spell accurately and punctuate their work
 - increasing opportunities to write at length in a variety of styles
 - using drama activities more frequently to help inspire pupils to write.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good in all classes by:
 - ensuring more able pupils sometimes begin work at a harder level
 - making more use of new technology within lessons
 - helping pupils check on their understanding of the lesson aims more frequently to gauge their own progress in learning.
- Improve pupils' preparation for their next schools and later life by:
 - working effectively with those small number of parents who do not send their children to school regularly
 - helping pupils in Years 1 to 6 know more about the beliefs and traditions of those outside their local area.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' good attitudes to learning are key factors in ensuring pupils achieve well. The school's determined promotion of their spiritual, moral and social development ensures that they work together with little fuss in class and that playtimes and lunchtimes run smoothly. Pupils' academic skills and confidence are improving. This is reflected in pupils' current good, but not always even, progress through to Year 6. Although pupils write fluently, their spelling is not always accurate and their punctuation is not consistent. In both mathematics and science pupils achieve well, with investigative work being high profile in day-to-day activities. The whole-school daily focus on teaching phonics is helping pupils become confident readers. In class, pupils enjoy activities ranging from Year 6 pupils reviewing work on mean and modal averages with an eye to them taking the national tests next term, to pupils in Year 1 being very excited to see a giant's footprint in their classroom. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities keep up well with classmates as they have good support both within classes and in small groups. This gives them the confidence to achieve well.

The pupils have a keen environmental awareness and a keen eye to conservation, simple recycling and the enthusiastic monitoring of the output from their solar panels and wind turbine. Healthy living principles are well understood by most pupils and activity levels are high at playtimes. Early and mid-morning snacks help their keep their energy levels up and pupils enjoy their chats together over their bacon sandwiches, crumpets or fruit. Pupils involvement in their own and local community is very good and their simple designs for a local road safety campaign were good. Their 'eco' contributions to help reduce the carbon footprint of the village aid their sense of

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community responsibility. An in-depth knowledge of how others, outside their locality, live is not well developed, but pupils' links with a school in Brixton and an impending visit to a partner school near Paris are widening their horizons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school provides an effective curriculum, which includes good attention to promoting basic skills such as whole-school phonic sessions each day. Practical work, such as designing shields for Greek Gods to learning about the life of Florence Nightingale, gives a flavour of the breadth of the pupils' experience. A cross-subject approach is making learning increasingly relevant, although it is not yet fully extended to include all subjects. A good range of extracurricular activities extends pupils' horizons. Pupils are enjoying learning French for the first time.

Teachers in most lessons are effective in capturing pupils' interests and in using practical activities. Audiovisual whiteboards are used to good effect in many classes, often displaying simple activities to 'warm up' learning at the beginning of lessons. Teaching assistants help pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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disabilities, to make good progress. In classes where teaching is less effective, pupils' progress slows at times as some explanations by teachers are too long. More able pupils often start at the same level as everyone else and teachers do not always make clear enough what pupils are expected to learn. The pupils' use of new technologies to enhance their learning is not a regularly feature found in activities which slows progress for those who could benefit. Some lessons inspire pupils through excellent teaching, as in a Year 1 lesson which fostered high levels of discussion, a keenness to write and resulted in pupils being immersed in creating their make-believe character.

Good levels of care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' sense of safety, which in turn means pupils feel confident to seek help if needed. The 'Nest' is liked by pupils who need time out to think and talk through issues and concerns. It has helped reduce behaviour difficulties and improve the well-being of pupils. Extra activities, specifically for those with special educational needs/and or disabilities, are effective in providing group or one-to-one support to help these pupils keep up with classmates. Links with the new academy are beginning to help ease the move for Year 6 pupils and the youngest pupils in the school benefit from good induction routines and links with parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by the governors, has a very clear sense of purpose in maintaining the well-being of pupils and the drive to improve pupils' progress. Clear priorities and plans of action are based upon systematic self-evaluation routines. Efforts to reduce levels of persistent absentees have paid off in that they have been cut by over half, but there is more to do to raise attendance to average levels. Subject coordinators are clear about their responsibilities in most areas and some benefit from 'shadow' colleagues to share the load. The monitoring of teaching and learning, while regular, does not always centre on pupils' learning needs sufficiently to identify where further improvements can be made. Senior staff are particularly effective at ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in activities and monitor progress carefully to spot any groups of pupils lagging behind. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated and relationships are harmonious.

Governors support the school well and they too have been effective in keeping an eye on the progress it is making. Visits are regular, helping governors to keep informed and

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to ask searching questions of senior leaders. Safeguarding arrangements are good and particularly thorough in the way staff-vetting procedures are adopted. The school's promotion of community cohesion has strengths, particularly in the way pupils know about their local area, through interviewing local members of the community for example, and through understanding the local environment. That said, the school has not yet looked closely enough at what needs to be done to assess if its provision is effective. Links just started with a school in Brixton and another near Paris are key initial steps in developing this aspect of the school's work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start in the Nursery. They make up ground quickly in their early language and number skills and in their social development. Well-planned indoor and outdoor activities, such as preparing their own snacks, help children gain confidence in themselves. In Reception classes, children benefit from a good balance of adult-led activities and those children choose. Themes based around topics, such as Australia or using the class 'aircraft cockpit' in the corridor, help children develop early writing, social and imaginative skills. Clear assessment of their ongoing needs means staff know how children are progressing. Outside activities do not always capitalise enough on the classroom themes or are not planned well enough to entice the children to find out more about it. That said, the children benefit from the climbing frame and small wheeled toys which they use well to extend their physical abilities and social skills in sharing. Children's welfare needs are catered for well and simple routines like washing hands are started from the early days in the Nursery through to the Reception classes, although

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there are occasional lapses in reminding them of its importance. Staff work well together to support the good leadership and management of this aspect of the school's work and have a clear sense of what still needs to be done to help children reach the levels expected when they enter Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a good number of parents and carers who returned questionnaires and the high satisfaction rate they indicated was reflected in comments that some parents included. These pointed to the friendly teachers, the children enjoying school, good communication and good support for pupils with special needs. Those with concerns were fewer in number and there was no single issue that was common in the responses, with the exception of behaviour. The inspection team found that, although not perfect, behaviour was generally good both in classes and in the playground.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Eastchurch Primary to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 140 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 388 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	69	42	30	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	102	73	37	26	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	95	68	37	26	7	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	86	61	45	32	9	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	98	71	37	26	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	86	61	43	31	10	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	56	58	41	0	0	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	74	53	57	41	5	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	57	54	39	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	82	59	42	30	6	4	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	53	58	41	4	3	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	97	69	38	27	2	1	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	71	37	26	4	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eastchurch Primary School, Sheerness ME12 4EJ

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. The vast majority of your parents and carers think your school is good and we agree.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- The youngest children settle in the Nursery and Reception classes well.
- You reach the expected standards when you leave and achieve well in most aspects of your work.
- You are good at keeping active at playtimes and you said you liked your snack club and enjoyed the bacon sandwiches.
- Nearly all of you said that you feel safe and can ask for help because staff care for you well. You think the 'Nest' seems really cool.
- Most of you behave well, although some of you think behaviour could be better still.
- The wide range of things you do, such as music, sports and seeing Florence Nightingale in the hall was a surprise!
- Your 'Eco' awareness is good. We loved the wind turbine!
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult, or have a particular physical difficulty, to achieve well.
- The teaching is generally good and helps you to learn well.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further:

- to help you to reach higher levels in aspects of your writing skills
- to make sure teaching is good in every class and in more lessons
- to remind some parents and carers about the importance of your attending school as regularly as possible.

You can help your teachers by keeping up your good behaviour and helping the school council to think up more ideas to make the school run smoothly. Good luck for next year when the other building opens and for the Year 6 tests.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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